

LESSON PLAN

INTRODUCTION

A. Course Title: Stress Management for Law Enforcement

Instructor Prerequisite:

Read article entitled "Stress", from WebMD. This short primer will provide the instructor basic background information to aid in answering questions.

Instructional Goals:

1. This course is designed to provide the participant with a basic concept of stress and the affects of stress on the human body's physical, mental and emotional well being.
2. This course is designed to provide the participant with a basic understanding of the stressors that affect law enforcement.
3. The course will also enable the participant to identify and utilize various coping techniques designed to combat or avoid stress.
4. This course will identify the mental, physical and emotional affects of dealing with death and traumatic incidents and how to cope with these events.

Instructional Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

1. Distinguish the difference between eustress and distress.
2. Define stress.
3. Identify the physical affects of stress.
4. Identify at least three of the top law enforcement stressors and why these items are stressful.
5. Identify at least three of the physical effects of long-term stress.
6. Identify two stress management techniques.
7. Identify at least two characteristics of hardiness.
8. Identify the stages of grief.
9. Identify when to call a health professional when dealing with stress.
10. Identify one method of supporting a friend in time of crisis.

OUTLINE AND PRESENTATION

Instructional Methods:

Class lecture with class participation, handout materials, overheads or PowerPoint graphics, and audio-visual aids.

Estimated Time: 1 hour

Suggested Reading: (For Law Enforcement personnel and their families)
Kirchman, Ellen. I Love a Cop; What Police Families Need to Know. Guilford Press, New York, 1997

Bibliography and References:

Allen, Roger J. and Hyde, David. 1988. *Inventory in Stress Control*. Bellweather press, Edina, MN.

Barnett, Rosalind C., Brener, Lois, and Baruch, Grace K. 1987
Gender and Stress. Free Press, New York

Cochrane, Glory. 1994. The Health risks and Health risk Factors of Sworn members of the Albuquerque Police Dept. 1994. UNM

Schafer, Walt. Stress Management for Wellness. 1992. Hartcourt, Brace, Jovanovich College Publishing, New York.

U.S. Department of Justice. Preventing law Enforcement Stress: The Organization's Role. 1992, NCJ 124584.

Instructor: NMLEA INSTR Presentation Date: Jan 2014

Prepared by:. Date:

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Revised/Reviewed: 23 Oct 2013

LESSON PLAN

I. What is stress?

A. Get examples of what students perceive as stress.

OH 1

LO 2

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OH 2	B. Define Stress “ Stress is any situation, real or imagined, that causes you to adjust.”
LO 1	C. Stress is perceived – what is stressful for one person may not be stressful for another
	II. Two types of Stress
	A. All humans must experience stress to live. Functions such as breathing create some “stress” on the body. That is why there are two types of stress.
	1. Eustress – (can be remembered as “Euphoric) This is a good type of stress. Examples: Excitement displayed at a football game; crying when you are happy; etc.
	2. Distress – This is the type of stress we relate the word “stress”. This is negative stress. Examples: worrying about a test; being yelled at; etc.
OH 3	III. Physical Affects of Stress
OH 4	A. The stress response is primal and goes back to the dinosaurs.
LO 3	B. The prehistoric times the reaction to a dinosaur attacking was – Fight, Flight or Freeze. Over millions of years, the human body did not evolve fast enough to change the physical reaction. The following responses occur when a person is stressed (this is related to the “caveman”)
OH 5	1. Eyes dilate – to let in more light to see the dinosaur
	2. Heart beats faster and harder – to supply blood to larger muscle groups such as legs and arms to fight or run.
	3. Blood pressure increases – increasing blood flow
	4. Blood rushes to the brain – supplying oxygen to think faster
	5. Digestion shuts down and blood is shunted to working muscles
OH 6	6. Increased muscle tension – to fight.

7. **Sweating increases** – to cool the body
8. **Decreased blood clotting time** – to heal cuts faster
9. **Hair stands on end** – (like a cat) makes you appear bigger to your foe.

Remember that all of the above effects happen when you are stressed in a matter of 2 – 5 seconds. Even when you are experiencing Eustress – for example: Think back to the first time you fell in love.

OH 7

IV. **Factors that influence our reaction to stress.**

A. **Personality Type- What are you?**

1. **Type A traits:** Aggressive; highly competitive, likes material gains; infatuated with speed; Angry/Hostile; Cynical; Impersonal.
2. **Type B traits:** Easy going- never in a hurry; accepting of others; may be somewhat gullible; internalizing; trusting.
3. Most people are a mixture of both, known as type "C". However there are good and bad traits in each.
 - a) Type A tends to get angry more easily and can become very cynical and less open minded.
 - b) Type B's tend to hold their emotions in and not talk about what is wrong. This can be a problem in police work.

OH 8

- B. **Type of work you do** - obviously police work is more stressful than a secretarial job because of the situations you become exposed to.
- C. **Changes in you personal life** – examples: divorce, death in the family, financial problems will affect how you react to a stressful situation.

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OH 9

D. **Past experiences** - example: if you had someone in your family that was murdered, you may react differently than someone who has not had this experience.

E. **Personal**

1. **Health** – sickness, for example, may affect your tolerance for a stressful situation.
2. **Age** – as you get older, people tend to be less tolerant during stressful situations.
3. **Financial situation** – personal money problems; underpaid job
4. **Family demands** – examples: childcare needs; opposite shift of spouse or caring for a sick parent or relative.

OH 10

F. **Job**

1. **Environment** – shiftwork rotation; equipment or lack there of; ergonomics of equipment
2. **Job demands** - shiftwork, dealing with volatile situations.
3. **Your expectations** – If you expected to go into police work thinking that it is like “NYPD BLUE” you’re going to be somewhat disappointed and may react to stressful situations negatively.
4. **Coworkers** – how well you communicate.

OH 11

LO 4

V. **Top Police Officer Stressors**

1. **Administration** – poor communication within department
 - A. Job definition and role expectations (chief’s view Vs. line operations)
 - B. Failure to listen to “line” troops when making policy. Inconsistent messages from above (field hears one thing, officer ears another. One shift does it one way and the next shift does it different)

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OH 12

2. **Criminal Activity** – Police officer stress is not always caused by the same things as firefighters or paramedics.
 - A. Stress is perceived differently. What may be routine for one may be extremely stressful for the other.
 1. Criminal element – constant exposure
 2. Feelings of helplessness – when dealing with victims
 3. No closure
 4. No opportunity to discharge stress – must remain on duty
 5. May not have debriefing options or may not feel comfortable with these options.
3. **Public Perception**
 - A. Especially when an officer is involved in criminal activity
4. **Media Portrayal**
 - A. Portraying police as “enforcers” – “thugs” etc.
5. **Personal and family pressures**
 - A. Shiftwork and family demands
 - B. Marital situation (divorce, death, etc)
 - C. Financial stability
6. **Environmental and Health**
 - A. Ergonomic Issues – cars, uniforms, equipment
 - B. Exposure to hazardous materials or infectious disease
 - C. Personal health – sickness, lack of sleep

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OH 13	<p>D. Stress is not always related to “big stuff”. Cumulative effects of little stressors add up and drain us of valuable interpersonal resources needed to deal with big stuff.</p> <p>7. Low Salary – contributes to financial stress</p> <p>8. Low Status - generally comes from public perception</p> <p>VI. How we handle Stress – General Adaptation Syndrome (shows how our bodies handle stress over time and how physical stress might give way to distress). GAS is also useful in explaining the role of adaptation in managing stress effectively. The three stages of stress could also be seen in the body’s reaction to physical trauma, such as fire, cold or an accident.</p> <p>A. Alarm- body prepares for direct response (fight/flight). Large amounts of glucose and oxygen supplied to heart, brain and skeletal muscles. (refer back to physical reactions to stress).</p> <p>B. Resistance – As the body mobilizes additional resources, largely through arousal of stress hormones, the body and mind cope with the difficulty in a sustained way.</p> <p>C. Exhaustion- if stressor is too intense for too long, the body’s reserves deplete and exhaustion begins. At exhaustion stage, wear and tear is progressive. Stress becomes distress and illness is likely. The type of illness will be determined by a particular weakness in the individual’s organ system.</p> <p>D. Give example of GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME</p>
HO 1	<p>VII. Stress Symptoms</p> <p>A. Hand out stress symptoms sheet and ask cadets to fill in. This sheet will help them identify how stress effects them individually.</p>
OH 14	<p>VIII. Chronic Stress vs. Acute Stress</p> <p>A. Give examples</p> <p>1. Acute Stress- demonstration</p>

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OH 15

2. Chronic Stress – with class, build the “cadet” day from hell. By drawing a stair-like reaction. Example: got up late (stress level rises); car wouldn’t start (stress goes up a little more); etc.

- B. Chronic Stress- few long-term affects from stress come from a single incident. It’s a day-to-day “little stressors” that create the physical hazards.

OH 16

IX. Stress and illness

- A. Approximately 80% of all illness is stress related.
- B. Review overhead. This visual illustrates the typical police stressors and the affects of these stressors immediately and over the long term if left “unchecked”

LO 5

1. Mental and Emotional effects
 - a) immediate effects- Depression, anxiety, extreme moodiness, emotional dissonance
 - b) long term effects (extreme)- Alcohol abuse, drug abuse, quit job, job termination, suicide.
2. Social effects (see overhead)
3. Physical Effects – During the stress response, certain hormones are released to help respond to the situation. However, long term or constant exposure to these hormones can affect physical well being. These hormones include:
 - a) **Adrenaline & Noradrenaline** –Adrenaline acts the liver to send more glucose into the bloodstream assuring a quick source of energy. Adrenaline also increases carbohydrates metabolism, dilates arteries and capillaries throughout the body, accelerates pumping by the heart, increases stroke volume and speeds up respiration. Noradrenaline works with adrenaline in circulating free fatty acids, while also raising blood pressure and constricting certain blood vessels in the body. Release of too much fat, in turn can promote atherosclerosis, build up of plaque in arteries of the brain and heart. Long term effects

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could lead to coronary heart disease or ischemic heart disease.

- b) **Cortisol**- helps in the release of protein for energy but also reduces the production of protein used for construction of immune cells.
- c) **Thyroxine**- produced by the thyroid gland. This hormone increases the rate at which the body uses fuel. During stress, thyroxine speeds up metabolism in tissues and cells. It also makes the body more sensitive to adrenaline.

OH 17

LO 7

IX. **Characteristics of Hardiness** – Research has shown that people who demonstrate effective coping skills have certain characteristics in common. To change your perception of the stressor:

- A. **Challenge** – “When life give you lemons, make lemonade”. See it as a challenge vs. Threat.
- B. **Commitment** - “Just do it”. Make a commitment vs. procrastinating. We all know someone who’d rather stand around and complain about it and make matters worse.
- C. **Control** – “I’m in the drivers seat”. – Take control vs. Feeling manipulated. Find positive aspects of your job. Refocus your attention; be proactive.

OH 18

X. **Coping Techniques**

- A. **Avoid** – simply means, if it makes you nuts don’t do it.
- B. **Alter** – Change – organize your time, go to bed earlier, ask for help
- C. **Adapt/accept** to stressor by changing your response or you perception. Eat right, exercise, and manage self-talk.

XI. **Negative Self Talk – are you creating your own stress?**

- A. We speak in a conversation at a bout 150 words a minute; you “talk” to yourself at about 300 words per minute. It is constant chatter, random associations, phrases, and words – go over examples of negative self-talk. Use some (not all) of the examples. Ask the class to provide some examples.

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1. **Awfulizing:** Turning a difficult situation into something intolerable, terrible.
2. **Catastrophizing** – Turning everything into a catastrophe: the worst possible outcome.
3. **Overgeneralizing** – generalizing from a single event to all or most other events
4. **Blaming** – attributing responsibility for negative events to something else.
5. **Personalizing** – Believing that other people's feelings/behaviors are caused by something you did.
6. **Perfectionism** – setting impossible standards for yourself
7. **Polarized thinking** – forgetting the positive things about yourself as soon as something negative surfaces
8. **Fortune Teller** – anticipating a negative outcome.

XII. Stress Management Buffers

A. Nutrition

1. Eat breakfast – it'll provide energy to start your day and make it easier to cope with minor stressors
2. Decrease caffeine – caffeine tends to mimic the effects of adrenaline, which may amplify any reaction you may experience. Caffeine is also a stimulant and too much can produce "the jitters" in some people.
3. Decrease sugar – avoid sugar highs and lows
4. Include "stress vitamins" – make sure your multiple vitamin the B complex vitamins. B is known as the stress vitamin.

B. Exercise

1. Exercise helps produce endorphins – which will help you cope with stressful situations.

- C. Don't **smoke** - nicotine is a stimulant, it also is highly addictive (more addictive than heroin.)

OH 19
LO 6

OH 20

OH 21

- D. **Relax** – Schedule “down time” for yourself. Make sure to do something for YOURSELF. Make an appointment with yourself if you have to.
- E. **Sleep** – get enough sleep. Eight hours is optimum, 5 hours is the minimum.

XIII. Stress Management Balancers

- A. **Socialize** – “get a life” Maintain relationships with family, non-police friends. Develop friendships.
- B. **Laugh** – read books that are funny. Look at the humorous side of things.
- C. **Schedule one thing fun each day** – no matter how small it is.
- D. **Do something creative**, learn something new (a hobby, sport)
- E. **Environment** – adjust your environment- ie. If you’re stressed while driving home, heavy metal music might create a more stressful environment.
- F. **Spirituality** – religion or whatever – some people find serenity in practicing their chosen activity or faith.
- G. **Take a vacation or a long weekend**. During the day, take short breaks.
- H. **Manage your time** – Set realistic goals and deadlines. Do “must do” tasks first.
- I. **Set Limits** – learn to say “no”
- J. **Choose battles wisely** – avoid pointless arguments altogether
- K. **Use calming skills** – don’t act on your first impulse. Give your anger time to subside.

OH 22

HO 2

HO 3

HO 4

HO 5

- ### XIV. Relaxation Exercises (see handouts)
- Many relaxation exercises focus on visualization or breathing exercises. Some people have never associated the act of deep breathing with relaxation and stress management. However, if you think about it, many martial arts techniques employ deep, controlled breathing into certain movements. Everybody uses deep breathing to relax whether they

know it or not. When a stressful situation is over, people may breathe a sigh of “relief.” The term “now I can breathe easier” stems from this. Consciously using deep breathing techniques takes some practice but can be very beneficial in the long run. – Try one technique with the class. (This should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes).

XV. Dealing with Death, Dying and Other Traumatic Incidents

A. Introduction: Dealing with death is an inevitable part of police work. However, some encounters may be harder to deal with than others for example: death of a child or baby – Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or death of an elderly person particularly in cases of abuse. Gruesome accident scenes can be particularly disconcerting.

B. Ask if anyone in the class has ever had to cope with this type of situation? You might ask what type of reaction he/she had.

XVI. Your Reaction – Grief

A. Even though you may not be related to the person, you may react to the death or traumatic incident. This reaction is known as “grief”. ***Grief is the healing process that enables a person to adjust to a significant change or loss. Grief can be expressed physically or emotionally. Understand that these responses are NORMAL.***

B. **Physical signs of grief:** Exhaustion; insomnia; restlessness, Gastrointestinal problems, nausea.

C. **Emotional responses:** Denial, anger, guilt, depression, personalization (applying the situation to your life); preoccupation with the event; reliving the event.

XVII. Stages of Grief –

Grief is different for everyone. How and in what ways you grieve will be unique to you. There are, however, stages of grief that are more or less common.

A. Stage I

1. **Shock** - is a natural anesthesia that protects you from pain.

a) You may act as if nothing happened.

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b) You may feel numb.

c) Later, you may not remember how you felt or acted.

2. **Denial** – You understand what has happened, but on a deeper level you don't believe it.

a) Denial provides a brief respite before you have to deal with the event or the repercussions.

b) It may pass quickly or may last for months

c) **Gallows Humor** – common among police and emergency response personnel. Gallows humor is a way to cope with the situation "laughing instead of crying."

B. Stage II

1. **Guilt or helplessness** – You tell yourself that you could have done things differently "if only" . . .

a) If only I had gotten there sooner

b) You may feel there was more that you could have done

c) You wanted to help, but didn't know what to do . . .

2. **Anger** – This is also a normal response. Many officers often feel rage, anger or frustration.

a) Toward the perpetrator

b) Frustration over the situation (DWI, SIDS)

C. Stage III

1. Adjustment and acceptance - life goes on. At some point in the grieving process you will be better able to come to terms with the event.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Debrief – utilize your department’s debriefing procedure (if you have one) OR talk to your sergeant or someone who has been through the same type of experience. B. Calming response – if necessary (see handout) C. Let yourself feel– don’t ignore what you are feeling, understand that it is normal. D. Give yourself time to grieve – remember everything you are feeling is normal E. Talk – find a friend or family member will listen. If that person tells you to “snap out of it,” find a more sympathetic friend. F. Be nice to yourself– get regular exercise; eat well, take time to relax or do something just for yourself. G. Express your feelings. -Write your thoughts down in a journal; paint your grief OR find any way possible to express your feelings.
OH 28	
OH 29	
LO 9	<p>XIX. When to call a Health Professional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. If anger, hostility or any strong emotion has or could result in violence or harm to yourself or someone else. B. If anger, hostility or any emotion interferes with your work home or friends. C. If any symptom becomes a continuous pattern and does not respond to self-care efforts.
OH 30	<p>XX. Where to get help (list services available)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Employee assistance programs B. Your department psychological services C. Your personal health plan
LO 10	<p>XXI. Supporting friends in time of crisis You may not be the person who is stressed, but someone you work with may come to you for support. In the police culture this is very</p>

important that you learn to support eachother. Sometimes police can only relate to the experiences a police officer may encounter.

A. Review handout